Opening Statement of

The Honorable Charles F. Bolden, Jr.

Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Before the

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

Committee on Science, Space and Technology

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss NASA's FY 2015 budget request. A more detailed written summary of the request has also been made available to the Subcommittee, so my verbal testimony will touch on the highlights.

The $17.5 billion budget request affirms the bipartisan strategic exploration plan agreed to with Congress in 2010 and ensures that the United States will remain the world's leader in space exploration and scientific discovery for years to come. It's an investment right here on Earth – for the benefit of the American people and the entire global community.

This budget keeps NASA on the steady path we have been following – a stepping stone approach to meet the President's challenge of sending humans to Mars in the 2030s.

The International Space Station (ISS) remains our springboard to the exploration of deep space and Mars. The Administration's commitment to extend it until at least 2024 guarantees we'll have this unique orbiting outpost for at least another decade. This means an expanded market for private space companies, more groundbreaking research and science discovery in micro-gravity and opportunities to live, work and learn in space over longer periods of time.

Astronauts aboard the ISS are helping us learn how to safely execute extended missions deeper into space. Later this year, we will see Exploration Flight Test-1 (EFT-1) of Orion. NASA is pressing forward with development of the Space Launch System and Orion, preparing for an uncrewed mission of the two together in FY 2018.

The budget also supports the Administration's commitment that NASA be a catalyst for the growth of a vibrant American commercial space industry.

Already two companies – SpaceX and Orbital Sciences – are making regular cargo deliveries to the space station. Later this year, we'll move beyond commercial cargo and award contracts to American companies to send astronauts to the station from American soil and end our sole reliance on Russia. If Congress fully funds our FY 2015 request, we believe we can do this by the end of 2017.

Unfortunately, due to the reduced funding the past few years for the President's "launch from America" plan, NASA is considering having to extend our current contract with the Russians and purchase more seats on the Soyuz spacecraft. Instead of

investing $450 million dollars into the U.S. economy to support American jobs, we could be spending that money in Russia, and that situation is totally unacceptable.

Budgets are about choices. The choice here is between fully funding the request to bring space launches back to American soil or continuing to spend millions in subsidies to the Russians. It's that simple. The Obama Administration chooses to invest in America – and we are hopeful that Congress will do the same.

In addition to ISS research, stronger partnerships with commercial and international partners, and building the next generation heavy-lift rocket and crew capsule to take our astronauts farther into space than ever before, our stepping-stone approach includes a plan to robotically capture a small near-Earth asteroid and redirect it safely to a stable orbit in the Earth-moon system where astronauts can visit and explore it.

Our Asteroid Redirect Mission will help us develop technologies, including Solar Electric Propulsion, needed for future deep space missions to Mars. Under our asteroid initiative, we enhnace detection and characterization of Near Earth Objects and improve understanding of asteroid threats to planet Earth. NASA's FY 2015 request continues support for science missions heading toward destinations such as Jupiter and Pluto. It enables NASA to continue making critical observations of Earth and developing applications to directly benefit our nation and the world. It maintains steady progress on the James Webb Space Telescope toward its 2018 launch.

Our aeronautics program will continue to focus on substantially reducing fuel consumption, emissions and noise to help make the Next Generation Air Transportation System – or NextGen – a reality.

Finally, all of NASA's investments help drive technology and innovation, spur economic activity and create jobs. That is why the President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative, with Congressional approval, will provide NASA nearly $900 million in additional funding in FY 15 to focus on specific areas where we can advance our priorities.

The fiscal 2015 budget advances NASA's strategic plan for the future. We'll continue building U.S. preeminence in science and technology, improve life on Earth, and protect our home planet, while creating good jobs and strengthening the American economy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to respond to any questions you or the other Members of the Subcommittee may have.